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ABSTRACT

Articles in this issue focus on adolescent literature. The first article is a reflection by author Katie Letcher Lyle on her personal experiences since the publication of her last novel. The second article examines the dramatic power of the novels of Alice Childress. The third article reports the results of a questionnaire on the reading background of college freshmen, while the fourth article deplores the success of soft cover teen romances that have flooded the market. The last article contrasts the use of first and third person narratives in adolescent novels. (HOD)

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The ALAN Review

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AN ANIMAL OF TILLED FIELD

Katie Letcher Lyle

I want to speak personally. The *ALAN Review*, on hearing that I *finally* have another novel out this season, *Dark But Full of Diamonds*, wants to know what's been happening since my last novel came out, six years ago.

In fact, scarcely eight years have passed since the publication, so full of promise, of my first book, *I Will Go Barefoot All Summer for You*, which was followed rapidly by one even more popular, *Fair Day and Another Step Begun*, which was followed by the one I wish had not been published, *The Golden Shores of Heaven*. In the excitement of these years, my little boy was getting old enough that I felt it was all right to go off for a few days here and there, leaving Royster and Cochran to appalling diets of beer and cheese, and the imagined chaos of unbrushed teeth. So I traveled around to a lot of meetings and conventions and spoke to a lot of teachers and students and librarians, and tried to promote my own books and young adult literature in general. (I was told once by a friend that I was a popular lecturer because I was "housebroken": I take that to mean I never failed to be able to stand up for a lecture or took my clothes off on the podium or yelled abusive things at members of the audience, as writers are apparently expected to do.) In fact, I tried to be stimulating and provocative about this new field of literature which, it seemed, had chosen me instead of my choosing it. I surely never intended that my novels be read only by teenagers.

Is *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* a YA novel? Is *Huckleberry Finn?* They are novels with protagonists under twenty, and that's what I was trying to write. Possibly that's because in my childhood, kids read what adults read, once beyond Pooh and Uncle Wiggly; the only books especially for teens, like the Nancy Drew books or such classics as *Understood Betsy*, were clearly not on a par with adult novels. I knew even at eleven that they were not honest about the compelling concerns I had then and was often ashamed of, concerns that I know now last a lifetime: our bodies (oh, the agony of having bodies!) and our souls (ditto!), and their relationships to other bodies and souls. To put the subject matter more specifically, I wanted to read about love and hate and birth and death and success and failure and good and evil, and *not* some watered-down imitation of them. So I chose to read "adult" books. I still find the label Young Adult, which I guess is necessary for marketing, troublesome, as it *seems* to imply a *real* category, when in fact it doesn't. Sue Ellen Bridgers, for example, writes fully as much about older people as she does about young people. Also the label Young Adult appears exclusive, seeming to indicate not only that young adults alone should read the books so labeled, but also that they perhaps should not read books not so labeled.

Maybe I'm still a teenager at the core, despite the ravages of forty-three years and the multifarious treacheries of miracle face creams and exercise programs, but I'm still basically interested in the same subject matter I was back then. No late bloomer I, but properly nipped in the bud at—oh, certainly no later than twenty-five. The reason I say twenty-five is that one time recently someone asked me, "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" and that's what I said, surprising myself. (And I wonder if our 98-year-old neighbor, deaf and toothless, tottering down the sidewalk slowly on her two canes, still has an image of herself as seventeen or twenty-four.)

In the last eight years, and especially in the last six, a lot has happened—to the world, to our family, to me. The Great Society is dead; the idea of the government ever paying me to sit somewhere and write is a lost dream. If I couldn't get an NEA grant in the Johnson or Carter years, it's a cinch I'll never get it now. In the world of escalating costs, my advances alone have stayed the same, reflecting the sad fact that maybe I'm not going to set the literary world on fire. In fact, prices have risen to such heights that survival seems an extravagance.

My mother has gone through a long illness and died, that absolutely uncritical earthly source of love and approval that I will never know again. A friend my age has died of cancer. Another friend, a writer with too much success too early, has left her husband and gone. Marriages all around us have split like so many overripe pods. My husband, having a serious threat to his health a while back, suddenly seemed mortal for the first time. Our son has grown up to fulfill his early promise gloriously, and (though I am his mother) is handsome and charming, witty and smart, athletic and tender. The fifth-grade girls call him on the telephone, and he rolls his heavenly blue eyes at me in longsuffering patience and droll humor, as they invite him to parties he doesn't want to attend. Trying to keep clear lines of communication, I ask, "Cochran, has anyone ever tried to get you to smoke a cigarette or take a pill or

anything?" And scornfully, he pierces to the heart of the matter: "Mama! I can *barely* swallow pills, I hate to be around anyone smoking, and you *know* how I am about needles, so quit worrying."

He's our comedian: once several years ago, he told me naps weren't good for you. Why not? I asked. "They're not high-fiber," he said drily. On an uncommon occasion when we had steak, I asked him if he wanted his rare, medium, or well-done. "What's that mean?" he asked. "Well, do you want it to be red, or pink, or gray, in the middle?" He thought a second, then said, reducing all my pretensions to mush, "Hmmm. I'd like mine *blue* in the middle." The kid was, is, okay, despite the fact that he's years older than his mother.

His sister, now three, is also beautiful, sweet, and winsome, but with a major handicap, cerebral palsy. She has taken all our lives to depths and heights that would never have been possible without her ("Mama, why don't I walk?" "Oh, you will someday." "Yeah, when I'm grown up!"), though of course her life has put especially heavy demands on us all, too. As is typical, we have become involved in handicapped rights and handicapped children's programs. Our lives do take turns we never imagined. Jennie is all female: "Cochran, don't *wrassle* me. I'm Mama's little girl, and she *needs* me!" And she's our future poet: "Daddy, this cat is so beautiful. Look, he has moons in his eyes." You think I won't use *that* in something?

Throughout these years, I have insisted on maintaining my writing schedule of two hours a day in the fear that, once abandoned, it might, like nursing, never again return. Southern Seminary, where I am now in my nineteenth year, remains supportive of my need to teach half-time in order to write. I don't want to let go of teaching; I love it too much. I have become aware that a measure of selfishness, of doing what I want to do, is tremendously important to my sanity under stress.

These years have produced five completed novels. Yet to my shocked surprise, each one has lacked something to make it publishable, and each one I have been unable to satisfactorily revise.

Did publishing three novels so quickly make me smug? Maybe inside I believed everything I wrote afterwards would be automatically accepted, and maybe I "let down" as my grandmother used to say. (She was generally referring to such vagaries in her friends and relations as getting into the sherry too early in the day or careless habits of hygiene, as in: "My goodness, Aunt Jane has certainly let down here lately.") Perhaps my energies have only been elsewhere, so that I was performing a meaningless chore in my daily writing: action without spirit, so to speak. I can tell you that I am terribly relieved, with the publication of this fourth novel, and a fifth (*Finders Weepers*), accepted for 1982 publication, to learn that I was not washed up at thirty-five. Being an American woman, I always suspected anyway that 35 was the outside limit for any possibility of attractiveness, productivity, etc.

Through the years, friends in the profession have stuck by me. Hugh Agee comes to town, takes me out to lunch, tells me how he can't wait for my new book, and adds how *slim* I still am. Louis Rubin, once my writing teacher, writes encouraging letters about how *all* writers have droughts. While I'm in New York, Richard Peck takes me to lunch at P.J. Clark's and we decide that someday we'll write a book together. Don Sobol writes to comfort me, "Success is not half what it's cracked up to be." Marilyn Marlow, my agent, does not drop me though for years she makes not a cent on me. My new editor, Refna Wilkin, reads all the failed manuscripts and says, "Publishable or not, everything you write is interesting."

And of course, and most important of all, never for one second has Royster been anything but encouraging and understanding.

I even get a few fan letters (maybe one or two a week). Not many in the face of 250,000 letters to some personality after a national television appearance, yet they tend to say, "You are my favorite writer. When are you going to write another book?" Even if some of them are written out of necessity when faced with having to write a letter to a writer for English class, it's wonderful to hear.

My message here is not, "Keep Writing and You'll Be Famous." It's more like, "Keep Writing if That's What You Have to Do." Writing is an opportunity to align the world the way one wants to—or perceives that it is—or feels that it should be. For me, it's more fun than tennis or bridge. And even if I don't do it real well, I do it a hell of a lot better than I play tennis or bridge. It's a trip back into teenagery that allows spoken what could never be spoken at the time, that allows a remaking of those awful, confusing years. I wonder if I will ever be done with adolescence. I wonder if *we* will ever be done with adolescence. It might be worth noting here that few American writers ever are. Adolescence, from *Moby Dick* through *Huckleberry Finn*, from *Catcher in the Rye* to *The Last Cattle Drive*, from Melville to Mailer and

from Cooper to Coover, is truly the American condition.

Some of us are by nature conforming, accommodating, so that what other people want becomes gracefully the motive for what we do. Others of us are unable to do that, but must do what we must do at any cost.

I am among the latter. I wish I could decide what I'm going to write. I genuinely admire writers who say cheerfully, "This is the year for incest. I'll do a novel about it," and then *do* it, just as one neatly dispatches an assignment or a report. For myself, I am forced to wander around in the dark until some idea jumps up and down in front of me, demanding attention. Only then can I start, commit myself and my time, and finish. For this reason, I doubt I'll ever be a popular writer, and I accept that limitation. Actually, if you want to know the truth, I never in a million years expected to be published in the first place.

I wish I had written the following words, but in fact Reynolds Price did, in the preface to *A Palpable God:*

> We crave nothing less than perfect story; and while we chatter or listen all our lives in a din of craving—jokes, anecdotes, novels, dreams, films, plays, songs, half the words of our days—we are satisfied only by the one short tale we feel to be true: *History is the will of a just god who knows us.*

Can I, will I, go on for the rest of my life writing books that only a few people will like? I don't know. I guess so. It's a big club, actually. It's better than not writing at all, to my mind. God knows I wouldn't know what to do with a lot of success—drink more, maybe—at any rate, the money would probably ruin me, just as the Bible warns. And, of course, I don't for an instant belive that. I really believe that money would merely allow me to better express my basic good taste.

My writing impulses, beginning way back with the encouragement of my mother, a couple of early teachers, a few of my students, my mother's friends and my friends, few of whom are particularly sophisticated readers, were from the beginning to be direct and clear and truthful, and to tell good stories, whatever *that* means. I still want to write like that. I've found myself very impatient with the experimental novels of the last decade or so, and am delighted to see what I perceive as a return to good stories well told. I still have to trust my instincts and my ears and my eyes, to pay attention to the ideas that dance in the dark. I choose stories that I need, or they choose me, stories that I believe. That seems to be the only pathway to the truth in writing—again, whatever that means.

And finally, in these years I have, naturally, read a lot: a lot new, and a lot old. I have made my way through Larry McMurtry, Frederick Exley, Toni Morrison, Jill Paton Walsh, and Hilma Wolitzer, to name a few favorites. I have reread Alan Paton, Richard Bradford, Capote-before-he-quit-writing-novels, and others. I've gone twice now through the baby books, and gone with Cochran up to the beginning of this strange world of YA fiction. Judy Blume is his favorite writer now; last year it was Donald Sobol. He is very impressed that I know these two *real* writers. On winter evenings we often build a fire and read some of the classics: *Charlotte's Web, Mistress Masham's Repose, Alice in Wonderland.* Of all of us, Jennie has loved this scene best since her earliest days, listening intently long before she could understand. Cochran sometimes listens unwillingly, as he had rather be watching the Rams or the Lakers on TV. Always I edit, skipping the parts I know won't hold his interest. One night last winter, while reading aloud from *The Wind in the Willows,* I came across a passage I did not remember from previous readings. I skipped it at the time, but returned later to read and re-read it. It's my current favorite, and what I have found in myself.

> As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be at home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of tilled field and hedge-row, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingerings, the cultivated garden-plot. For others the asperities, the stubborn endurance, or the clash of actual conflict, that went with Nature in the rough; he must be wise, must keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime. ■

PERFORMANCE AND GOOD INTENTIONS: Novels by Alice Childress

Ken Donelson, Arizona State University

THE dramatic power of Alice Childress' novels comes after long practice. Before she wrote novels, she was both an actress and a playwright with the American Negro Theater, appearing in *Rain* and *Anna Lucasta* and writing *Just a Little Simple* from a Langston Hughes novel and *Wedding Band*, an interracial romance starring Ruby Dee in an Ann Arbor, Michigan, production and Eartha Kitt on Broadway.

Childress' first novel is unquestionably dramatic. *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1973) was dramatically more than merely fleshed-out script, and its use of multiple narrators to bring the audience different viewpoints about the thirteen-year-old drug addict Benjie Johnson will remind some readers of a stage drama unfolding. But *Hero* is a novel, not a play. Characters are not left for actors to interpret but instead developed. We enter the minds and hearts of characters in ways impossible on stage. Still, the novel has the immediacy and urgency of a dramatic performance. Childress cares deeply about Benjie, just as she cares about Benjie's mother Rose and Butler Craig, Benjie's stand-in father who genuinely loves Benjie. Caring can sometimes betray a writer into melodrama or didacticism. Childress lapses into neither. The characters could have easily become mere stickfigures walking through a moral tale, but they are not. In a world riddled with frustration and hypocrisy, they live through an often unpleasant but always real world. We are never allowed to forgo that experience along with the characters, just as we are never allowed to forget Childress' major theme, that we are responsible for our actions. Good intentions are never enough. Performance counts.

A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich is tough and tough-minded, full of street talk likely to offend some readers, though the language is never used gratuitously. Benjie's father long ago abandoned the family. Benjie's mother now has a live-in lover, Butler Craig, but Butler is no hanger-on. He loves Rose; he is tough but warm and caring and tender, and despite Benjie's rejection, Butler needs and loves the boy. Home life frightens Benjie, school life bores him, and he casually drifts into the drug world. His closest friend Jimmy-Lee cares, but he drifts out of Benjie's life as Benjie seems more and more to care about less and less. Two teachers try to help, but since they can hardly help themselves, they fail in almost every way, though they recognize the problem and turn Benjie in.

In the climactic scene, Butler catches Benjie stealing, chases him and saves his life when Benjie threatens to jump from a rooftop. Butler realizes Benjie's desperation when, as Butler holds the youngster suspended in space, Benjie looks down at the courtyard below.

> "Let go, Butler," he says. "let me die. Drom me, man!" He's flailin his legs, tryin to work loose my hold, hollerin and fightin to die. "Let me be dead!"

But Butler will not let Benjie take the easy way out. Butler knows that Benjie's willingness to try life is only a start. Later, after the death of one of Benjie's friends from a drug injection, Benjie goes to the funeral and talks with Butler.

> "Look here," he say. "Square your shoulders, admit you been a junkie, but now gonna stay clean and report to daytime center for your followups. If you don't do right, Butler gonna have to knock you down, you hear?"
>
> "I can do it," I say, "long as somebody believe in me."
>
> "Dammit, Benjie," he say, "you gotta do it even if *nobody* believe in you, gotta be your own man, the supervisor of your veins, the night watchman and day shift foreman in charge-a your own affairs."

Butler's (and Childress') belief in performance rather than intentions and blind faith comes across when he goes to the rehabilitation center. The advisor tells Butler that Benjie needs "some male hero figure he can identify with" and then shows Butler books about black history and black movie stars and black athletes. Butler is not impressed with that old trick to turn kids on to people outside their own environment.

> I gave the advisor some advice. I say, "Some these big-time, celebrity-high-lifers can't take care-a themselves, they in as much trouble as you and Benjie. Yall gotta learn to identify with *me*, who

> gotta get up to face the world every damn mornin with a clear head and a heavy heart. Benjie once told me a hero ain't nothin but a sandwich—and you say a hero is a celebrity! Listen to *my* credentials; then maybe yall can pin me on a hero button. I'm supportin three adults, one chile, and the United States government on my salary . . . and can't claim any of em for tax exemptions. So, explain me no heroes. Yeah, and some-a our neighborhood success stories are livin offa Benjie's veins, while they ridin round in limousines and grandstandin to win everybody's admiration!

Critics recognized the power of *Hero*. *Publishers Weekly* (August 6, 1973, p. 65) noted that "Her first novel for a young audience dominates the landscape like Mount Everest among other peaks and many molehills" and Zena Sutherland added her praise in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (February 1974, p. 91) "This is not only a moving if harrowing story but also a literary triumph; only a playwright as experienced as Childress could achieve such drama and such conviction in a book that consists of short monologues." Many reviewers *reminded* readers (and by implication *warned* them) that the book's street talk could cause problems with administrators and parents (and teachers and librarians), though they hastened to add the language *was* defensible. A reviewer in *Teacher* (January 1975, p. 111) put the matter in proper perspective. "Kids will realize, despite the street language and the action, that nothing is done just for effect in this book. It is genuine, cynical, and hopeful all at once."

Awards followed. *Hero* was one of ten nominees for the 1974 National Book Awards, Children's Book Category, and runner-up to Eleanor Cameron's *The Court of the Stone Children*. It received the Woodward Park School Annual Book Award (Brooklyn) given each year since 1958 to the children's book which "best demonstrates good human relations." It was listed in *School Library Journal* (December 1973) as one of the "Best Books in 1973," and G. Robert Carlsen's University of Iowa book poll listed it as one of the "Best Books for Young Adults" for 1973 (*English Journal*, January 1975). George Woods, Children's Book Editor of the *New York Times Book Review*, commented that *Hero* was "a book that I think is technically, emotionally, and intellectually close to perfect . . . . The book's indefinite, problematical. You've got to supply your own answers, supply your own hope, supply direction for yourself." (Geraldine DeLuca and Roni Natov, "The State of the Field in Contemporary Children's Fantasy: An Interview with George Woods." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Fall 1977, p. 15)

Childress' next novel did not appear until 1979, and *A Short Walk* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan) had a less happy reception. *Publishers Weekly* (August 20, 1979, p. 76) praised the novel: "Childress has written a story about black life in America seldom equalled in immediacy and depth." Less happy was Mary Biggs in the October 15, 1979, (pp. 2234–2235) *Library Journal*: "Despite some effective scenes, the novel is severely flawed by poorly-developed and unconvincing characters, inexpert and seemingly purposeless shifts in narrative point of view, a story line that fails to cohere, and a basic lack of originality."

Aimed largely at adults, *A Short Walk* is much longer and much more diffuse than the first novel, but the added pages do not add power. Cora James' father early told her that "life is just a short walk from the cradle to the grave," and the book covers Cora's life from birth until she has proved herself a survivor of Harlem in the late 1940's. Cora's father is white, her mother black, and Cora soon learns what it means to be without roots. She vows to "get a little something" others cannot take from her. She leaves an unsatisfying marriage to run off to New York City to become part of Marcus Garvey's movement. There she meets a childhood friend with childlike dreams. Cora learns she too has dreams, but she can separate them from reality. Cora survives, and admirable as she is and exceptional as some scenes are, *A Short Walk* proves unfulfilling, temporarily intriguing but permanently uninvolving, a disappointment after *Hero*.

Rainbow Jordan (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1981) may lack some of the drama of *Hero*—it is a quieter book—but it is a compelling study of a young girl searching for someone who will care for her, someone she can trust with her dreams. As in *Hero*, narration is first person with various characters allowed to present their viewpoints, but while in *Hero* Childress uses *eleven* narrators (of which Benjie narrates seven chapters and Butler four), *Rainbow Jordan* has only three narrators for its considerably longer chapters (Rainbow narrates ten chapters, Miss Josie five, and Kathie two.) Given Rainbow's life, the proportion of chapters given Kathie, her mother, and Josie, whom she lives with when Kathie is gone, represents Rainbow's reality.

Rainbow is fourteen, her twenty-nine-year-old mother Kathie is perpetually out chasing men or

dreams, and fifty-year-old Josie (Mrs. Josephine Lamont) serves as a drop-in way-station for Rainbow when Kathie leaves unexpectedly. When that happens, Rainbow pretends Kathie will soon return, though she knows from experience Kathie's return isn't likely to be soon. Josie has her own problems, a husband on the verge of leaving her, fear and loneliness, and recognition that her pretended age of fifty (when she is fifty-seven) is getting harder and harder to maintain. These three people tell the story of Rainbow's coming of age, her sexual awakening, and a near sexual experience she is not quite ready to handle.

Of the three, the youngest has the fewest illusions. She pretends to herself that Kathie's departures mean nothing, but she knows she is lying to herself. She pretends that friends cannot hurt her and knows they can. Only about Eljay, her boyfriend, does she have some illusions, and they are perhaps less illusions than needs. When Eljay attempts to seduce Rainbow through an appeal to her compassion, Rainbow isn't buying.

> We sit on the park bench and he's singin the same same song. "Girl, got hang-ups bout sex. Nothin wrong with sex. It's a natural thing. If a guy don't get off, once in a while, like his health'll be broke. You can injure yourself from holdin back feelins. Can get a hernia.'
>
> I don't like bein asked to make love to save his health. Make me feel like I'm the Red Cross or Cancer Aid. No matter how 'natural' he say sex is . . . I'm thinkin Kathie would kill me to death if she find out I'm into that.

But she loves Eljay, and when she decides to give in to his clumsy seduction, she fixes up the apartment, invites him over, and is heartbroken when he arrives with a new girlfriend in tow.

At much the same time, Josie's marriage has collapsed, and Rainbow finds herself in some ways the more mature of the two and comforting Miss Josie.

> "Rainbow, I'm self-employed, not old enough for any kind of pension, not young enough to retire . . . or to find somebody who will spend the rest of the time with me. You're a child. You don't know."
>
> This is goin down too rough on her . . . but it is phony not to face up. After all, if somebody wants out . . . let them go. Didn't I let Eljay go to Janine? Bad as I went on . . . I never ask him not to leave.

But then Rainbow betrays her own lack of understanding about the old, as Josie has not understood the young.

> "Miss Josie, plenty old people findin happiness. They content to be makin pies and visitin the sick. They not thinkin bout makin love and like that. They sit in the best part-a the bus . . . like it say 'save this seat for the elderly and the handicapped.'"
>
> She lookin at me like I'm three. Wipe her eyes and seemin amuse. "Some old folks pretending bout pies and good deeds being enough. Wanting to love and be loved . . . never stops. They pretend it does to win approval from those who are younger. It's a sad joke. Our faces and bodies no longer match our thoughts and desires. . . ."
>
> "Unfortunately how we look has a lot to do with drawing lovers and friends. As we fade, people grow rude . . . and we become meek and foolish."
>
> "Not everybody, Miss Josie. Lotta elderly have dignity. Miss Townes say people should grow old gracefully."
>
> She's feelin her letter from Hal . . . not opening it, just feelin and turnin with her bleach-cream hands. "Rainbow, no one is expected to grow old gracefully before middle age. Grace is suddenly demanded when we are old, when we are weakest, when we have the least money . . . and face death. That's the time when we are told to live gracefully. My dear, maybe 'grace' should be practiced all along the way. Why wait until youth is gone."

And they discover, together, that the sense of loss each feels, Josie for her husband, Rainbow for Eljay, transcends age.

> "I know how you feel. Didn't I lose Eljay?"
> "You're very young. It's not the same."
> "Miss Josie, hurt is hurt and losin is losin."

Rainbow Jordan intriguingly reverses age roles. In *Hero*, Butler finds a way to reach and save Benjie, the older logically helping the younger. In *Rainbow*, older and younger help each other, but clearly Rainbow is at the right moment more mature and accepting about life than Miss Josie. Josie helps Rainbow, but Rainbow saves Josie.

In both YA novels, Alice Childress stresses the need we all have for relationships and love. No matter how finely tuned those relationships are, she tells us we are all as individuals naked in the wilderness, and we must find shelter for ouselves. We may seek help, but finally we must act for ouselves. It is not enough to intend to perform. It is not enough that others believe in us. It is only enough when we believe in ourselves. Then we can perform, and we can applaud our performance. ■

THE NOVELS COLLEGE FRESHMEN HAVE READ

Theodore W. Hipple and Bruce Bartholomew, University of Florida

ALTHOUGH much has been written about the *possibilities* for teaching novels in secondary school English classes, little has been said about the *realities* of what is actually being taught to and read by students across the country. Scant current research exists to indicate the nature and depth of reading undertaken by secondary school students. With this need in mind, we developed a questionnaire designed to examine the reading backgrounds of college freshmen and provide information which could, by inference, indicate the type of reading completed by students during their secondary school years.

Our questionnaire consisted of 34 questions, four that asked for information about the (1) age, (2) sex, and (3) high school grade point average of each respondent and (4) amount of reading for pleasure each annually completes, and thirty that asked respondents to report whether they had read any of thirty novels we listed. These included fifteen traditionally taught novels and fifteen adolescent novels. The traditionally taught novels were selected from lists of the most commonly required books in high school English classes as reported in Squire and Applebee's *High School English Instruction Today* (1968) and Hipple, Schullstrom, and Wright's *The Novels Adolescents are Reading* (1975). The 1975 study also listed novels identified as student favorites, and these titles provided us with some of the older adolescent novels we listed such as *The Pigman*, *The Outsiders*, and *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*. To complete the list of fifteen adolescent novels, we selected titles from those that had garnered fairly widespread attention in the field of adolescent literature. For example, they were frequently mentioned in articles in *The ALAN Review* or *English Journal*, or they were regularly discussed in papers at NCTE or IRA conventions. From these sources titles such as *Forever* and *Summer of My German Soldier* were drawn.

We sent questionnaires in packets of thirty to instructors at seventy-three state universities in all fifty states. We asked them to have the questionnaires completed by students in freshman composition classes. In all, we received responses from 1193 of these students representing 50 universities in 35 states covering all geographic regions of the US.

A breakdown of this sample population, according to responses to the first four items of the questionnaire, revealed the following: (1) 76% of the respondents were nineteen years of age or younger; (2) 53% of the total were male, although the nineteen-and-under segment consisted of an equal proportion of males to females; (3) 66% earned high school GPAs of 3.3 (B+) or better, with 54% of these being female; (4) 27% stated that they annually read ten or more novels for pleasure. This last, perhaps most noteworthy, segment of the sample—the more avid readers—deserved closer examination. We found that two thirds of this group were female, a statistic which is consistent with the fact that 38% of the total female sample read ten or more novels a year for pleasure as compared to only 17% of all males. Furthermore, less than 20% of the males with a 3.3 or better GPA read as many as ten novels a year, while more than 40% of the females with similar academic records do so.

A tabulation of the "yes" responses to our questions about students' past reading experiences produced results which were both expected and surprising. We anticipated that the traditionally taught novels would have been more commonly read than the adolescent ones. The traditionally taught were often required. That the disparity between the two types would be so great, however, did surprise us. The readership for the most commonly read of the traditionally taught novels, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, more than doubled that of *Go Ask Alice*, the most commonly read of the adolescent books. Five of the traditionally taught novels had been read by more than 50% of the respondents, while eleven of these had been read by 40% or more. Of the adolescent titles, only *Go Ask Alice* exceeded 30% readership, while five of these had been read by less than 10% of the students. Table 1 provides a summary of these and other results. Percentages listed indicate the size of the readership for each novel, based on the total sample. Numbers in parentheses and brackets represent, where applicable, the ranking of novels from the Squire/Applebee (1968) and Hipple/Schullstrom/Wright (1975) studies, respectively.

When we compared our results with those of the previous studies, particularly Squire and Apple-

TABLE 1

Traditionally Taught Novels	%	Adolescent Novels	%
1. *Huckleberry Finn* (5) [1]	75.1	16. *Go Ask Alice*	32.9
2. *The Red Badge of Courage* (6) [12]	57.3	17. *A Separate Peace* [2]	28.6
3. *To Kill a Mockingbird* [3]	57.0	18. *Lisa Bright and Dark*	27.6
4. *The Scarlet Letter* (2) [4]	54.5	19. *The Outsiders*	27.2
5. *Animal Farm* [8]	51.9	20. *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*	23.1
6. *The Old Man and the Sea* (10) [9]	49.6	21. *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*	22.0
7. *Lord of the Flies* [5]	46.6	22. *Where the Lilies Bloom*	20.5
8. *The Great Gatsby* [6]	46.4	23. *The Pigman*	16.5
9. *A Tale of Two Cities* (3) [19]	45.2	24. *Summer of My German Soldier*	10.6
10. *The Pearl* (9) [7]	45.1	25. *Forever*	10.1
11. *Moby Dick* (7) [34]	41.7	26. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*	8.5
12. *The Catcher in the Rye* [10]	36.5	27. *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*	6.9
13. *Silas Marner* (1) [27]	15.2	28. *It's OK If You Don't Love Me*	4.9
14. *Ethan Frome* [20]	10.1	29. *The Chocolate War*	3.1
15. *The Return of the Native* (3) [27]	5.9	30. *Blinded by the Light*	1.4

bee's research, two interesting differences caught our attention. First, the most frequently read novels are those written by American authors, whereas two British "classics," *Silas Marner* and *The Return of the Native*, which were regularly required reading in 1968, appear to have fallen from favor. Second, three titles, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *The Catcher in the Rye*, which were identified by Squire and Applebee as particularly controversial novels to teach, have gained widespread readership today. These two differences may indicate a shift away from the former rigidity associated with the selection of novels to teach in secondary English classes. It will be interesting in the future to see if these differences remain, or if today's conservative, back-to-basics climate will usher in a return of Clym Yeobright and Silas Marner.

To provide a further analysis, we clustered responses according to sex, age, etc. of the students. In so doing, we found that a significantly higher percentage of females than males had read most of the novels listed. This is particularly noticeable with the adolescent novels and such traditionally taught titles as *The Great Gatsby* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Only *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *Moby Dick* had been read by a higher percentage of males than females. Those students who had higher GPA's and who characterized themselves as readers for pleasure had, as could be guessed, much greater knowledge of both the classics and the adolescent novels.

We also noted what may be the obvious to publishing companies and observant English teachers: namely, adolescent novels are becoming a larger part of the reading backgrounds of high school graduates. Those graduates in the nineteen-or-under group had clearly read the adolescent books more commonly than respondents who were twenty or older. Still, the low overall readership for the adolescent selections relative to that of the classics should remind us that the growth trend is still a gradual one.

The most significant inference to be drawn from the results of our study is that students—at least college-bound students—are reading novels. The simplicity of this statement does not belie its importance, particularly at a time when schools are being seriously questioned about their ability to teach and promote reading. English teachers should be encouraged by the high percentage of readership for such recognized classics as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *The Scarlet Letter*. At the same time, however, English teachers should be concerned that male students are not matching their female counterparts regarding the depth and variety of their reading experiences.

Clearly, more needs to be done to encourage boys to explore the possibilities for learning and enjoyment provided by fiction.

Adolescent literature offers one possible means for closing the gap between the reading of male and female students, even though, ironically, adolescent literature is where the gap is most obvious. Only 14% of the males had read *Forever*, 0.1% *It's OK If You Don't Love Me*. Both of these novels feature sexually sophisticated teenage girls as protagonists. Perhaps if boys were regularly exposed to some of the better adolescent novels with male protagonists like Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (2.9% of the males had read it) and Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* (6.7%), they would be motivated to expand their reading interests. We make this suggestion based on the belief that boys would find these kinds of novels both stimulating and enjoyable reading.

Our suggestion that teachers make an effort to expose their male students to novels such as *The Chocolate War* raises a thorny question: Is it sound teaching to encourage boys to read "male novels" which feature predominant male characters and focus on issues which may be of greater interest to boys than girls? In their recently published book *Literature for Today's Young Adults* (1980), Kenneth Donelson and Alleen Nilsen debunk as myth the belief that girls will read books about girls and boys, while boys will read only books about boys. Yet the results of our study indicate that this may indeed be the case. Whether these results accurately reflect the true reading interests of males and females or simply the instance of a self-fulfilling prophecy realized (as Donelson/Nilsen might claim) is a question for conjecture. The fact remains, however, that male students are reading less than females, and if "male novels" are what boys read more readily, then we still believe that increased exposure to adolescent novels like *The Chocolate War* can serve to encourage boys to read more often.

Moreover, one has to temper any euphoria about the good news that students are reading novels in schools with the less happy conclusion that many of them are not reading novels out of school; i.e., for pleasure. Only 27 percent of the respondents stated that they read ten or more novels a year for pleasure. It is to be remembered that the respondents were college freshmen, people who presumably had achieved the objectives of their English classes; at least they had passed the courses. Typically, an overarching objective of the English program is its emphasis on literature: students are expected to become readers. Apparently many have not, at least not to the extent that they read ten or more novels a year for pleasure. One could, possibly, provide a counterargument of sorts to the effect that high school and college students are too busy reading required material to engage in reading for pleasure, but ten novels a year hardly seems too much to expect.

Another finding that should be of concern to secondary school English teachers is that, despite the widespread attention it receives, adolescent literature still seems to lag well behind the traditionally taught novels. Even such a seeming "classic" of the field as *The Pigman* and a novel like *Forever* "that all my students have read" (to quote more than one apparently hyperbolic high school teacher) are read by relatively few students: 16.5% and 10.1% respectively. The obvious inference, probably an accurate one, is that high school students read, in the main, what is required of them.

And that inference puts into perspective what this research is all about: the question of what the high school literature curriculum should include. Works like *Silas Marner* and *The Return of the Native* are today not as commonly included as they seem to have been at the time of the Squire/Applebee study (1968) or the Hipple/Schullstrom/Wright one (1975). *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *The Scarlet Letter* continue to rank high among the required novels, as they did in 1968 and 1975. Are these the novels teachers want their students to read even at the risk of their not reading much else? Or should teachers consider requiring some non-classic novels, *The Outsiders*, for example, or *Where the Lilies Bloom?* Would the requiring of these kinds of books promote reading for pleasure more than have the classics? Curricular questions of this order require extensions of this kind of "what is" data to "what if" research that goes on over a number of years, both with college-attending graduates and those who do not go to college, to learn what, in fact, does promote reading. ■

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WHY THE SUCCESS OF THE TEEN ROMANCES DEPRESSES ME

Alleen Pace Nilsen, Arizona State University

IN the 1970s, many of us thought that adolescent literature was finally coming of age. Paul Zindel had won a Pulitzer Prize and still seemed pleased to write for teenagers. Vera and Bill Cleaver wrote consistently good books, and so did Robert Lipsyte, M.E. Kerr, Norma and Harry Mazer, Robert Newton Peck, and Barbara Wersba. The power of the new realism was shown in such books as Glendon Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children*, John Donovan's *Wild in the World*, Isabelle Holland's *Man Without a Face*, and Alice Childress' *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death* were read and reviewed as serious literature for both teenagers and adults.

Now at the beginning of the '80s, it's depressing to come off this high and find that the attention getters are series of soft cover love stories—what our library science students have dubbed "training bras for Harlequin romances": The *Wildfire* and *Wishing Star* books from Scholastic, *Sweet Dreams* introduced by Bantam in September, and the *First Love* books introduced by Simon and Schuster in October. Aimed at readers of age eleven or twelve and up, the series appear to be on their way to the same kind of financial success as their adult counterparts, which now account for thirty percent of mass market paperback sales.

Scholastic was first to discover the market which last year brought them 1.8 million dollars through school and bookstore sales. According to editor Ann Reit, the thirty *Wildfire* books have been consistently at the top of Scholastic sales lists, except when occasionally displaced by a media tie-in or a cartoon book. *Christy*, *Superflirt*, and *Beautiful Girl* are among the favorites. The *Wishing Star* line is being added this year for slightly older girls.

Nancy Pines at Bantam admitted that their *Sweet Dreams* line was "inspired" by Scholastic's having "uncovered a market that is seemingly endless." Bantam hopes to compete by having their stories more tightly written and by having "brighter, punchier, and more sporty" covers. Their first six titles are *Laurie's Song*, *Little Sister*, *California Girl*, *The Popularity Plan*, *Princess Amy*, and *P.S. I Love You*. Two more books will be released each month.

Simon and Schuster has the advantage of being able to make a tie-in between their new *First Love* series and their already well-known *Silhouette* line for adults. Over the summer, ads appeared in trade journals and tags were appended to *Silhouette* television commercials so orders were already in from schools and libraries before the first six titles were printed. All carry the identifier "First Love from Silhouette," and include *Serenade*, *New Boy in Town*, *Kate Herself*, *Please Let Me In*, *Flowers for Lisa*, and *Girl in the Rough*.

The books are a pendulum swing away from the realism of the last decade. They feature beautiful high school girls, usually only-children from white, upper-middle-class homes. The audience is strictly girls (Bantam has received 2,000 letters, not one from a boy) attracted to the easy reading, the beautiful-people covers, and the wish-fulfilling plots.

A Simon and Schuster representative explained, "If there are problems, they have to be normal ones—no drugs, no sex, no alcohol, no bad parents, etc." The problems don't seem so normal to me, but at least they are ones that most girls could dream of coping with. In *Beautiful Girl* by Elisabeth Ogilvie (Scholastic) the problem is that April is so exquisitely beautiful that people are either jealous or afraid of her, but she finally learns that being beautiful is simply a part of her life she will have to cope with, and "If boys flocked—or didn't flock—what difference? Besides, there was Matt. More and more I looked forward to being with him."

The problem in *The Popularity Plan* by Rosemary Vernon (Bantam) is that Frannie is too shy to talk to boys, but her friends draw up a plan in which she is assigned certain ways to relate to a boy each day. Sure enough, she is asked for so many dates she has to get a wall calendar to keep from getting mixed up. But by the end of the story she is happy to "give it all up" and settle for Ronnie, the boy she really liked all along.

In *That's My Girl* by Jill Ross Klevin (Scholastic), Becky is an ice skater who has to fight off getting ulcers while worrying about the upcoming Nationals, her chance at the Olympics, and whether she will lose her boyfriend who feels ignored. Bantam's *California Girl* by Janet Quin-Harkin has an almost identical plot except that Jennie is competing for the Olympics as a swimmer.

A key difference between teenage and adult reading has been that books for young people are mainly purchased by or through schools and libraries for some educational value. Taxpayers feel a right to say where their dollars are being spent. So publishers must first please librarians and teachers who act as agents for the taxpayers, and *then* please a young audience who has the final say by simply refusing to read.

But creators of romances bypass traditional adult critics and reviewers by coming out in paperback editions only, which never receive as much critical attention as hardbacks, then marketing books directly to young readers through newsstands and chain bookstores. Even Scholastic, which courted teachers for decades and sold through school bookclubs, made half of last year's sales through commercial channels.

Direct marketing is crucial to the success of romances because they will not get the approval of many adults. Those who do approve will most likely follow the reasoning of Vermont Royster in the *Wall Street Journal* (June 24, 1981) when he compared romances to his reading of books his mother considered trash—Tom Swift, The Rover Boys, Detective Nick Carter, and Wild Bill Hickock. He admits the plotting of the romances is banal and monotonous and the writers can probably turn them out wholesale, but at least, "The spelling is correct and they do manage mostly to abide by the rules of English grammar." He recommends the books as an aid in helping a generation of television-oriented kids acquire the habit of reading. Once they are hooked, "call it an addiction if you will . . . young people can be led by good teachers to enlarge their reach."

I'm sympathetic to Royster's point, but I'm also depressed by the success of the romances. Part of it is purely personal. As someone devoting my professional life to literature for young readers, I'm embarrassed. I feel like a betrayed wife with an *I gave you the best years of my life, and this is what it comes to* reaction.

A second reason has to do with my sons and my daughter and what such books do to their expectations about boy/girl relationships. My boys would never read such books, but if the girls they want to date have read them, their lives may be affected. In young romances, boys are models of psychological perfection much as pin-up girls in men's magazines are models of physical perfection. I suspect boys can't stand to read romances because the books force them to compare themselves with the idealized boys in the stories and they end up feeling awkward—and inferior.

When I called one of the editors and told her I was thinking of writing an article entitled, "The Jocks in Girls' Fiction—Characters Without Support," she said, "Oh, these aren't jocks. They're very nice boys." Yes, they are very nice boys, far too good to be true. They have more wisdom than the girls' parents, more patience than all the adults as well as the girls' friends, and are so in love that even when rebuffed they wait on the sidelines until their true worth is recognized. Examples from the books illustrate some of the other characteristics of the dream boy.

He is mature and unselfish: At the end of *That's My Girl* after the celebration party, Jed is grateful for a few minutes of Becky's undivided attention:

> "It's good to have you all to myself for a change. From here on that won't happen too often. I'll have to get used to sharing you with the whole Olympic figure skating team, the reporters, the photographers, Vera, your hairdresser, your dressmaker, your business manager, your . . ."
>
> "Hey, I'm skating in the Olympics, not going to Hollywood!", Becky interrupts.

He is there when he's needed: In *Beautiful Girl,* Brendan, who throughout the story plays big brother, protector, and consultant to his beautiful cousin, shows up on a deserted country road just in time to rescue her from being harrassed by three teenage hoods. His explanation of knowing that he was needed is simply, "I had funny feelings all day. I didn't know whether it was the flu coming on or if I've got psychic powers from my Irish great-granny who could read tea leaves."

Just by being, he solves problems: Also in *Beautiful Girl,* April says, "I went back to bed wishing I could call Brendan. Once I heard his voice I would feel like *me* again, not someone cut off forever from all dear, safe, daylight things."

He has inner qualities: In *The Popularity Plan,* after the girl has decided to give up trying to go with all the boys and to settle for the quiet, shy boy in her art class, the two spend a day on the beach and, "That enigmatic boldness that Frannie had glimpsed only in Ronnie's vibrant painting was now very evident in his personality. What she had thought was contradictory and puzzling was simply another dimension of the same, fascinating Ronnie."

He is competent: When two acquaintances are hurt in a motorcycle accident in *Beautiful Girl,* April's mind is chaos, but Matt runs and shuts off the motorcycle and then puts his head down to Bobby's chest and announces that he isn't dead.

> "I'll get an ambulance," Matt said. "I may be a little while getting to a telephone if I can't flag down a car. So don't panic." He was talking to me. "And don't move or touch him. Oh, here." He unzipped

his jacket and put it over Bobby's chest and shoulders. "It's not much, but it'll help." He looked intently into my face. "Will you be all right?"

"Yes," I said, knowing it had to be so.

Just as my boys are unable to compete with these dream boys, my daughter is unable to find a boyfriend who has all of these qualities. It's small wonder that boys retreat to fantasizing through the false bravado of locker-room talk while girls daydream with the romances and hope to get a boyfriend who is two or three years older than they are. The age difference gives the boy some chance of having had time to develop at least a few of the expected qualities.

The view of life portrayed in the romances puts just as much pressure on my daughter, but in a different way. This is best illustrated through a quiz, "Does He Like Me?", which was written by the Scholastic *Wildfire* editor and printed in a promotional magazine distributed last spring. The quiz tells the reader that if a boy likes her, he will: 1) comment on her appearance, 2) remember what interests her, 3) ask her what she would like to do, 4) call her sometimes just to say "Hello," 5) really listen to her, 6) confide in her about something that worries, scares, or pleases him, 7) never put her down, especially in front of other people, 8) keep talking to her even when one of his friends comes along, 9) notice when she is upset or sad or depressed, and 10) ask her for a date.

This sounds wonderful. The only problem is that not a single boy that my daughter meets will have read this quiz. So even if she follows the exact outline given in *The Popularity Plan*, it's highly unlikely that she will find a desirable boy who behaves as the quiz says he will. In reality such behavior is a matter of training and experience in social situations rather than emotional attachment.

The quiz is a distillation of the attitudes expressed throughout the romances. If my daughter takes it seriously, she is likely to conclude that there's something wrong with her. She can come to this conclusion via two routes: 1) No boys like me because no boys act as the quiz says they should, or 2) The only boys who like me are clods because they don't act as the quiz says they should.

Another aspect of the romances that damages the self-image of readers is their false portrayal of dating. High school is made to appear a continual round of parties and dates, when in reality ten percent of the kids do ninety percent of the dating. Unless teenagers are going steady (and this may be why so many kids go steady), their social life is mostly made up of group activities rather than formally arranged dates. And when a couple breaks up, seldom is another boy waiting to ask the girl out.

That the retreat from realism and the embracing of the romances should come after a decade of feminist consciousness raising also depresses me. Apparently many girls are simply rejecting as too difficult the demands that were placed on them. I tried to raise my daughter to feel responsible for her own happiness, but she might justifiably question why I expect more from her than the world expects from the idealized girls in the romances. If even they—with their brains, good looks, and perfect parents and homes—must wait for boys to bring them happiness, then why does she have to find it for herself?

It's interesting that even though the very existence of the books and their stress on boys convey the idea that nothing could be more important in a girl's life than popularity, the romances give a passing nod to feminism in that the girls have career ambitions. For example, in *P.S. I Love You*, Mariah is a writer. In *Beautiful Girl*, April says she's going to be a lawyer instead of a model, and then of course there are the Olympic stars in *California Girl* and *That's My Girl*.

What depresses me the most about the romances is their treatment of sex. Each company's representative used the term "squeaky clean" to imply there is no sex. But sex is their *raison d'etre*, and their creators use hidden persuaders to appear "squeaky clean" *and* at the same time sexy. Individual book titles and trademarks are full of sexual connotations. Each beautiful young model on the poster-like covers has her own come-hither look. The cover of Scholastic's *That's My Girl* features a braless skater in a white dress carefully posed so that the shapes of three nipples—two on her and one in her mirrored reflection—are clearly visible.

The books are teases. Authors set up sexy situations and then skip to the next chapter. It's easy to titillate but difficult to write about sexual feelings honestly to help girls know what it's like to have a real boyfriend. I'm not bothered that romances make young women think about sex. That's natural. What I don't like is their incompleteness, their hypocrisy, and their one-sidedness.

A basic difference between these books and the "innocent" teen novels of the 1950's is that today's readers do not belong to an innocent generation. They have real life heroes such as movie stars Kristy McNichol, Tatum O'Neal, and Brooke Shields. Shields has no image other than sexuality, but even the relatively "wholesome" McNichol and O'Neal co-starred in *Little Darlings* as two girls at summer camp bent on "freeing themselves" from the burden

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REPORTS FROM BOSTON SESSIONS

NEW YA NOVELS WORTH THE READING TIME

A large audience gathered to hear Richard Abrahamson, the "Books for Young Adults" column editor of *English Journal*, review some current novels published for teens. Three of the books presented raise related issues of prejudice and mind manipulation. *Chernowitz*, by Fran Arrick, is the story of a Jewish boy isolated by the anti-Semitism aroused by one bully in a school. In *The Wave*, originally a TV show, a history teacher builds a Nazi-type group identity in a high school in order to demonstrate the origin of Nazi power. The short story *The Children's Story* by James Clavell powerfully details the dangers of group manipulation and brainwashing in an elementary school setting.

Abrahamson introduced a pair of books by familiar YA authors which counteract the formula trend in young adult romance novels. *Close Enough to Touch* by Richard Peck and *I Love You, Stupid!* by Harry Mazer are unusual stories of love from a male point of view. Other novels reviewed included *Taking Terry Muller*, *Flunking Out*, and *The Walk West*.

Some classroom ideas for literature study were also described. Questioning strategies for books might include a discussion of realism as an issue of consistency of character and emotion. The handout included Richard Peck's, "Ten Questions to Ask About a Novel" (*ALAN Newsletter*, Spring, 1978, pp. 1 and 7). Peck's questions offer an opportunity for teenagers to critically consider the relationship between books and TV or movies. Telephone conference calls were described as a way to use technology to motivate young people to read. Group participants were eager to have the handout list of new young adult novels, 1981 Children's Choice books, and questions worth asking about young adult novels.

Barbara G. Samuels

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE FOR BASIC SKILLS

Arthea J.S. Reed focused on the principle that the abilities and skills of children do not grow in isolation from their interests and needs and from the content of the work they do in school. She pointed out that teaching strategies that force students to work on discrete skills, to look for single, simple answers are a waste of time. Young Adult literature gives teachers an opportunity to integrate language and literature with the real world of the teenager.

Reed showed how the YA novel can work well for the social studies teacher as well as the English teacher when the goal is helping students to become independent learners of new vocabulary rather than memorizers of standardized word lists. Students are encouraged to look for key words in their reading, on television, and in the newspaper. They are encouraged to play with the words, to make connections between words in school books and words in their "real" lives.

Grammar, too, can be taught in the context of the YA novel. Reed used Cyrus Smith's "Read a book in an hour" scheme as the jumping-off point for teaching sentence combining. She also provided an outline for the student writing of a group novel. Ideas for using the YA novel for composition in context included: YA books as models for student writing, YA novels as intensified experiences to write about, ways to rewrite specific parts (ending, point of view, setting, etc.) of YA novels.

Among the handouts at this session were the following: "YA Books to Use in Units in which "Basic Skills" are Taught in Context," "60 Ways to Tell about Books" (as alternatives to the dreaded book report), and "Using Young Adult Literature to Teach the Writing Skill of Character Development."

Susan Oharizn

ROBERT CORMIER

Robert Cormier, the featured speaker at the ALAN breakfast, talked about the problems of censorship today, noting that this was one frightening aspect of being a young adult writer. He cited several cases in which his own books are being barred from the classroom and school libraries. Mr. Cormier has been very supportive to the individuals and groups who are fighting to maintain the freedom to read and total access to literature. He read from letters from his young adult readers to show that they too were opposed to any form of censorship and that they are capable of dealing maturely with violent themes and profane language.

Mr. Cormier was warmly received by the many people who came out at 7:30 am to hear him. The audience asked Mr. Cormier numerous questions about his books and writings. It is indeed heartening to know that authors of Cormier's literary stature are willing to take the time to help English teachers and librarians defend this precious freedom.

Donald J. Kenney

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THE BOOKSHELF—An In-Depth Review

***Juvenile Delinquency in Literature* by Thomas West Gregory. Longman, 1980. 309 pp.**

Reviewed by Tony Manna, Young People's Theater, Brunswick, Maine

JUVENILE Delinquency in Literature takes you on such an intense and, at times, horrifying journey through the dark, shadowy regions of human behavior that it is not an easy book to read. Although several of the twenty-eight stories end with some type of hope—precarious as it may be—and others depict the repercussions of what the law considers a "minor offense," the pervasive temperament of the collection is a combination of deceit, dishonesty, and megalomania. These are adolescents on their worst behavior, most of them incorrigible antiheroes who lack the promise of reformation—there are few personal epiphanies in the literature chosen by Gregory to show how juvenile delinquency is treated in realistic and naturalistic fiction.

For the most part, the stories evoke a sense of dread and alarm, the same type of enticing apprehensiveness that keeps drawing readers into the nightmarish world created by Elie Weisel, or Ralph Ellison, or Robert Cormier, writers whose visions of the perversity, estrangement, and cynicism which surface in a society out of touch with the worth of the individual could very well qualify for inclusion in Gregory's collection.

The book is skillfully organized, a reflection of the compiler's comprehensive research on the topic, and the scope of the material is impressive. Using an offense classification, Gregory has selected stories which illustrate grave crimes, minor misdemeanors, and petty pranks, each of them affecting the offender, the victim, and those who figure into the adolescent's life with varying degrees of consequence. Gregory purposely ascribes to an extremely open-ended definition of what constitutes delinquent behavior in order to allow for the breadth which is one of the most salient features of the collection. "In most instances," he writes in one of his provocative introductions, "antisocial acts committed by youngsters between the ages of seven and eighteen are defined by law as delinquencies to be adjudicated in courts specifically designed for youthful offenders."

It is not surprising, then, that many of the adolescents we meet in the stories are as familiar as the boy next door, the girl down the block, or the gang that loiters by the subway station, depending on the environment in which each of us lives. The settings are urban and rural, suburban and inner city, and the backgrounds are affluent and middle class, blue collar and impoverished, though most of the minority group adolescents portrayed are closer to the stereotype of the indigent male underdog than reality seems to warrant. Delinquency, it turns out, is remarkably widespread and the forms it takes are as infinite as the motivations from which it springs.

Complementing the differences in character, background, and offense, as well as writing style, is the historical range of the stories. Since Gregory has arranged the stories chronologically within each of the six sections, it is possible to note how social attitudes and reactions, at least those reflected in fiction, have developed since the turn of the century. The collection becomes that much more useful to professionals concerned with the sociology of adolescence as well as those whose interest is the changing treatment given adolescents in literature of this type. Gregory's cogent remarks about these changing impressions can serve as touchstones for spirited discussions.

The four stories comprising Part 1, "Causes of Delinquency," illustrate the types of conditions which induce young people to express themselves through aberrant behavior, though Gregory is wise to point out that all the stories in the collection probe, in one way or another, the motivations underlying delinquency. According to the authors represented here, the causes for delinquency are a complexity of psychological and sociological factors.

In the case of Rook's "Young Hooligans" which reads like a documentary, the cause is the influence of an older, adulated criminal, well-versed in the practices of collusion and thievery, who uses his charisma to control a coterie of aspiring thugs. A deep-seated psychological problem is at the root of Paul's malaise in Willa Cather's absorbing classic, "Paul's Case, A Study in Temperament," where a fantasy of opulence eventually leads a young man to such dissatisfaction with his real situation that he commits suicide. James Purdy's "Everything Under the Sun" is equally intense. Cade, a directionless orphan equipped with an uncanny ability to control and dominate, demonstrates a tour de force of manipulation by convincing Jesse, his older, less secure, and newly reformed roommate, that Cade's

dissolute lifestyle will have to be acceptable if he is to stay with Jesse, a threat which strikes at a fear in the very center of Jesse's being.

The offense classification promised in Gregory's general introduction covers parts 2 through 5. "Minor Offenses" include a school truancy, a case of running away from home, the off-beat pranks of a prep school student, and a street fight replete with the narrator's parenthetical indictment of the specious values he feels his society supports. The stories range in intensity from Ghose's droll account of how a sympathetic teacher deals with his students' contrived excuses in "The Absenses" to Grace Paley's "The Little Girl," in which a minor offense, her running away from home to the city, leads to rape and murder. In the wake of the types of fear, disillusionment, and suffering the stories in this section uncover, the term, "minor offense," soon begins to take on a grave connotation.

When writers deal with victimless offenses, the subject of Part 3, they delve more deeply into the feelings of the offenders and those surrounding them and therefore give a more overt treatment to the causes and repercussions of delinquent behavior. The use of drugs is looked at from quite different perspectives in Updike's "The Hillies," Southern's "Red-Dirt Marijuana," and Lardner's "Hector Rodriguez." The first story, as much as indictment of the underlying problems in an ostensibly unsullied town as it is a delineation of a stratified and listless drug culture, is yet another reminder that no community is exempt from the problem. Southern's underplayed and humorous narrative shows how twelve-year-old Harold, a novice when it comes to marijuana, which he and a farm hand find growing on his father's farm, succumbs to the temptation contained in a graphic lecture about the joyful effects of smoking. "Hector Rodriguez," on the other hand, is a grim first person account of Hector's addition to heroin, as poignant a tale as Benjie's in Alice Childress's *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. Alcohol abuse figures into Rumaker's "The Truck," while James T. Farrell delineates Studs Lonigan's conflicting emotions in response to his involvement in a gang sex incident in "Boys and Girls," an offense which brings into question Gregory's purpose for including the story in the victimless section.

Property and personal offenses, the delinquencies examined in parts 4 and 5, also run the gamut from minor to serious infractions. In almost every case, the offender is depicted as a victim, the offense evolving out of an infected sense of self. No matter how slight the delinquent behavior, the negative effects, namely, haunting guilt and increased isolation, are engraved on the mind and heart. Even Al in Saroyan's "The Parsley Garden," who steals a hammer on an impulse and then later works for the store clerks he steals from in retribution, will always carry the burden of his lost innocence. Similarly, the nameless boy in Sherwood Anderson's "A Criminal's Christmas" now bears the "mark of Cain" because he steals some petty cash from his boss's register in order to buy presents for his impoverished family.

When the offenses are considered more serious, as they are by each of the authors dealing with personal assaults in the gravest stories in the collection, the repercussions speak for themselves; it is the psychological causes which these writers uncover with acute insight. What manifests itself here is the offender's detachment from and disregard for the value of life and living: an essential human awareness has become contaminated. In Clayton's "The White Circle" a boy's hatred leads to an attempted, premeditated murder. In "A Bottle of Milk for Mother," by Algren, the offender's twisted alibis and conflicting reports are unraveled to the point that without them he is like a straw man. A mindless murder spree is at the center of Joyce Carol Oates's "Boys at a Picnic," and assault and battery, instigated by an inordinate sense of revenge, is the subject of Garrett's "The Last of the Spanish Blood." Finally, one of the most poignant moments in the collection stems from the painful anticipation of an impending homocide, a crime never seen by readers but felt nonetheless because they can do nothing to prevent it, in Beaumont's "A Point of Honor" which describes the genesis of a brutal initiation rite.

Thomas Gregory very wisely concludes the collection with stories that illustrate the treatment given delinquents and the problem of rehabilitation. In light of the nature of the offense, the most humane treatment is given in John Hawkes' "The Universal Fears:" after an assault which nearly leaves him dead, a teacher returns to his reform school students (for more of the same?) out of a sense of loyalty and conviction. In contrast, we have the judge's robot-like attention in "Young Convicts" by James T. Farrell: "Judge Anderson just didn't have the time. The cases had to be disposed of. Tomorrow there would be the same number. The juvenile problem was insoluble. There was no settlement of it. The same boys were warned, but they were

continued on p. 39

WHERE ARE WE?—Settings of YA Novels

Donald R. Gallo, Central Connecticut State College

THERE was a time when, if you wanted to be in the movies, you had to go to Hollywood, California. Today that's not absolutely necessary, though California is still a better bet than Kansas. It's similar in most other artistic fields. If you're going to get to the top in television, or ballet, or painting, or writing, you're better off in California or New York City than in Kentucky or New Hampshire. It's not accidental that most big-name authors live in or around New York City or in several idyllic places in California. The settings of their books are often in similar locales.

That's true of literature for young adults as well as of adult novels. Most of the novels of Judy Blume, Norma Klein, and several other YA writers who reside in New York City, for example, take place in the same metropolitan area—if not Manhattan, then Queens, or Long Island, or northern New Jersey, with occasional side-trips to the Connecticut countryside. (Judy Blume moved to New Mexico a couple of years ago and, not surprisingly, much of her latest YA novel, *Tiger Eyes*, is set in Los Alamos.)

Fortunately for kids who live in other parts of this vast nation, not all YA authors live in or write only about teenagers in New York City or California. But it's not easy to find many contemporary YA novels that take place in other locations. What follows is a quiz for well-read devotees of adolescent literature.

Match the titles/authors in the right-hand column with the city in which the novel is set in the left-hand column:

____ 1. Arlington, VA	A. *Up in Seth's Room*, Norma Fox Mazer
____ 2. Atlanta, GA	B. *Garden of Broken Glass*, Emily Cheney Neville
____ 3. Baltimore, MD	C. *Zanboomer*, R.R. Knudson
____ 4. Chicago, IL	D. *Hatter Fox*, Marilyn Harris
____ 5. Denver, CO	E. *My Mother Is Not Married to My Father*, Jean Davies Okimoto
____ 6. Detroit, MI	F. *My Bodyguard*, Joe Claro
____ 7. Santa Fe, NM	G. *The City Rose*, Ruth White Miller
____ 8. Seattle, WA	H. *Sunday Father*, John Neufeld
____ 9. St. Louis, MO	I. *Martin and Tige*, Frankcina Glass
____10. Syracuse, NY	J. *P.S. Write Soon*, Colby Rodowsky

If you prefer fill-ins to matching items, try recalling a title which is set in the more general *rural* areas of each of the states listed below:

1. Southeast Missouri _____
2. The Everglades, Florida _____
3. The Ozarks, Oklahoma _____
4. Kansas _____
5. Vermont _____
6. Massachusetts _____
7. Pennsylvania _____
8. Mississippi _____
9. New Hampshire _____
10. Chesapeake Bay, Maryland _____
11. North Carolina _____
12. Central New York/the Adirondacks _____

Answers can be found on page 48.

BEYOND BOOKS—Media for the Classroom

Dan Ward, Georgia State Department of Education

THIS column has given me more difficulty than any other. The writing wasn't hard because I didn't do any of it. But the "not writing" nearly killed me. However, the sage wisely advises, "When you have a good thing, don't mess with it." I have three: David Muschell (Cedar Shoals High School, Georgia), Ann Wolensky (Parkview High School, Georgia), and Tom Liner (Eastern Kentucky University). This time it's their column.

The Electric Grandmother

This review began at home. I set up the machine and asked to delay dinner a minute.

Reel one: A middle-class family loses its mother, leaving grieving children and a distraught father. Out of the blue comes a chance for the family to have an "electric grandmother" that will give them love and attention at boundless levels. They go to the factory to select their grandmother's "look" and return to await delivery.

At this point, my reaction was mixed and dinner was waiting. The story-line from Ray Bradbury's "I Sing the Body Electric!" (upon which the film is based) was being followed fairly well, but where was the poetry of Bradbury's writing? "A little silly," I mumbled, "How about dinner?"

"Let's wait until we see the grandmother," my wife countered, obviously enjoying the film. (So much for dinner.)

Reel two: The grandmother arrived. Suddenly the whole tone and mood of the film changed. When Maureen Stapleton stepped out of her robotic sarcophagus, the story came to "life." The film competed successfully with our meal and we compromised. We ate by projector-light, totally absorbed by the performance. At the end, my wife was crying and smiling, and I found a tear or two of my own. I don't like to cry at films unless a good, sincere emotion has been evoked, and it had . . . but for adults.

Well, I thought, now to show it to my cynical students, the more rugged test of any film. I decided to show it to "basic" sophomores, "advanced" juniors, and "medium" seniors, plus several levels of teachers.

My sophomores were angry at Agatha, the youngest child, who refuses to accept the "grandma": "My momma would have slapped me for talking like that!" "That child is *so* bad!" Good, they accepted the grandmother as real without thinking about it. Bradbury caught them: they felt anger at the human and cared about how the machine was treated. (I'll bet they have become angry with their little brothers for changing channels on the TV . . . I know I have and probably every other red-blooded sibling has.)

The seniors were enthralled by the *seeing* of the movie: "This is the best thing I've ever seen at *school!*" Well, that didn't tell me much, but it was sincere appreciation.

My juniors wrote their reactions:

> "To me the film seems like a dream you might have after a loved one dies." —Derek
>
> "At first I interpreted the meaning of the film to be that a machine could replace a person. As the film went on I realized that this was not entirely true, as the grandmother did not possess such vital human qualities such as vulnerability to death and ability to age." —Bob
>
> "It showed that you can feel for things that aren't really alive; for example, little kids with their blankets and toy dolls." —Lynne
>
> "I think the point of the movie was that you do not love a person just because he has a heart, a stomach . . . you love a person because of the way they act." —Anne
>
> "Every time I started forgetting she wasn't human, she would do something extraordinary and *remind* me that she wasn't." —Kathy

Of course, there were criticisms: the "grandmother factory" scene at the beginning of the film was generally critiqued as being too "young" for their tastes, too much like "Willie Wonka." Some video-game-special-effects-lovers wanted to see the actual robot manufacture. Even though Paul Benedict's performance was praised, most negative comment came for this scene.

The highest praise from students went to Maureen Stapleton's portrayal. She *does* seem to understand Bradbury's poetic style, and she captures the heart of what "I Sing the Body Electric" has to tell about love and death. Something in the confidence and sincerity of her characterization makes the words of the story come alive.

One theme of the story lacking in the film is the Pinocchio idea: the notion that something inanimate could become alive through contact with love. This element would have added to the film.

A pedagogical point about the film: it is just a little long for one classroom period. The film was intended as a 60-minute prime time special and, with commercials, it would fit that time frame.

"The Electric Grandmother" is an experience all by itself, but its use in classrooms has wide possibilities: units on death, aging, experimentalism in literature, the nature of love, science fiction, or initiation would each benefit from the discussion the film can and does provoke.

[*The Electric Grandmother* adapted from Ray Bradbury's "I Sing the Body Electric" from Learning Corporation, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019 / (212) 397-9360; c; 49 min.; 16mm—$625 sale / video—$500 sale / $50 rent; edited version available (not reviewed); c; 32 min; 16 mm—$450 sale / video—$350 sale / $40 rent]

David Muschell

The Small Assassin

She thought it was trying to kill her. In its birth, she was dying. As her anguished cries stilled, she drifted into an exhausted slumber, and the murderer was expelled into the world. So begins the recording of Ray Bradbury's "The Small Assassin."

When, in time, the mother's fear of the baby compounds and moves toward hate, most listeners will have one of two reactions. Some will condemn her for feeling none of those "natural," maternal instincts that society teaches women they must have. Others, more privy to the truth of instant motherhood, will sympathize and believe that she will grow to love her child as all mothers do.

However, for Alice, the mother, the evidence that the child is trying to kill her mounts. A rag doll left strategically near the top of the stairs and the planned cries that keep her awake night after night convince Alice that her child is a thing of evil.

Eventually, her husband persuades her to see a psychiatrist. The day she agrees to this, he finds her body, still and broken, on the floor. The rag doll, so carefully put away, has somehow found its way back to the top of the stairs.

Distraught over Alice's death, the husband begins to blame the baby. He supposes it to be capable of thought, malice, and revenge. He wonders what would happen if one child in 10,000 is born with a physical ability beyond its age and decides to pay its parents back for forcing it from the warmth of the womb; he believes that one child in 10,000 to be his.

The doctor, assuming these ramblings to be only those of a grieving husband, sedates him. Returning the next morning, the doctor finds the father dead. During the night, the small gas nozzle at the base of the bedroom wall has somehow been turned on. Suicide? Perhaps.

The doctor walks toward the infant's room to look pityingly at the child who must grow up bereft of both parents. But, out of the corner of his eye, he sees a small white form scuttle down the hall. Horrified, he realizes both parents were right, and he has birthed a murderer. Taking the responsibility for ridding the world of the "wee devil" he brought into it, he ends the story, "See Baby, something bright, something pretty . . . a scalpel."

My advanced 9th and 10th graders gloried in the horror of the ending. Why not, they are the target and the patrons of such movies as *Halloween* and *Friday the Thirteenth*.

Throughout, this story keeps the listener in suspense; not until the end is one able to decide whether it is the insanity of the parents or the insanity of the situation which is responsible for the deaths. Although fantastic in nature, the small details and the plot sequence cause the listener to wonder: how impossible is "The Small Assassin," really?

Immature listeners might have difficulty following a sound track without visuals, but more advanced young students and older, more patient students will pleasure in the horror of the story.

"The Small Assassin" connects with other stories of its ilk, such as those of Poe and Stephen King, those which also tempt that part of us which loves to be frightened. There is so much poor literature of this genre, that it is a delight to find a recorded story which satisfied my desire to teach good literature and my student's desire to hear exciting stories.

[Ray Bradbury's "The Small Assassin" from Caedmon, 1995 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 / (212) 580-3400; $8.95 disc or cassette.]

Ann Wolensky

The Swimmer and The Death of Justina

I have a thing about wanting to hear a work performed by the artist who wrote it. I want to hear Bob Dylan sing "Blowing in the Wind," not Peter, Paul and Mary, even if they do sing prettier. Anyway, that's why I perked my ears up when John Cheever's *The Swimmer and The Death of Justina* (Caedmon) arrived in the mail. Cheever I knew as one of the

important writers in the country, but what did he sound like?

To paraphrase the man himself, Cheever's reading voice has the brilliant sound of a voice over water—clear, precise, almost without warmth. It is a voice as controlled as the chill irony of his two stories. "The Death of Justina" is both funny and terrible. Moses, the narrator, calls it "an example of chaos"—but the chaos of commuter trains, a nightmare supermarket, vapid commercials for a youth tonic, and zoning regulations that prohibit dying is too close to be merely funny. Terror is the loneliness, and the meaninglessness, under the silly commercial surface.

"The Swimmer" has the brittle sharpness of sunlight on water. It is understated, intricate, rich in imagery, and difficult for my students. The strange odyssey of Neddy Merrill across the swimming pools of the county where he lives is, finally, the story of loss—the loss of memory, of strength, of wealth, of prestige, of love, of hope. The disturbing thing about Neddy's absurd and lonely journey is the almost mythic quality of the narrative Cheever has created by the time the swimmer confronts his empty house and his empty life. The precise and cold voice crosses the short space between reader and listener and brings recognition and pain.

For "The Swimmer" students will need a copy of the text (*The Stories of John Cheever*, Bantam, 1978). Other stories of human loneliness that seem to carry the same mythic quality of disturbing simplicity include Albert Camus' "The Guest," Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," Nelson Algrin's "A Bottle of Milk for Mother," Katherine Mansfield's "Marriage a la Mode." One excellent, and cheap, collection is Warren and Erskine's *Short Story Masterpieces*, Dell, 1954). It is dated but useable with the advanced students with whom you will use "The Swimmer."

One note of warning: in "The Swimmer" and in "The Death of Justina," there are a few minor and implicit sexual references. You will want to review the album carefully if you work in a school system where the censors are loose.

[John Cheever's "The Swimmer" and "The Death of Justina" from Caedmon, 1995 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 / (212) 580-3400; $8.95 disc or cassette.]

Tom Liner

They do good work, don't they. I think I'll furlough the bunch and do the spring column myself. I used to do that, but that was before I rediscovered *Tom Sawyer* and the picket fence. ■

Nilsen, continued from p. 14

of virginity. And walking by a magazine stand, anyone can spot headlines about live-in boyfriends and Marie Osmond "wanting a baby."

In the midst of such media acceptance—and promotion—of youthful sexuality, what today's teenagers need from adults is not more commercial exploitation of their good looks and their awakening feelings. What they need is help in understanding themselves and their relationships. The success of the soft cover romances will be noticed by authors, editors, and publishers of other young adult books. Imitation is inevitable, but I hope that it will be done selectively. Young readers appear to be tired of depressing, problem novels. They want some happy stories. Let's hope that better writers can provide these without the falseness, the setting up of impossible expectations, and the sexual titillation that fill the romances. Is it too much to hope that someone might even write a happy love story so honest that boys as well as girls will read it? ■

Manna, continued from p. 34

brought back . . . There was nothing to do but rush from case to case. . . ."

Given the pessimism which reigns regarding the promise of lasting reformation, Kristin Hunter's "Hero's Return" is a rare, though believable, story about a reformed boy's determination to stay that way. In the process, he also convinces his younger brother, who idolizes him, that crime does not pay, therefore directing him away from an impending involvement in the drug scene. To end the collection on such a positive note seems like wish fulfillment in light of the characters and conflicts discovered in the underground of conniving, disaffection, hatred, and malevolence to which you are transported once you open the cover of *Juvenile Delinquency in Literature*.

Although the book may keep you up at night behind a carefully locked door, it gives in the final analysis an uncompromising, and therefore honest, picture of a problem it would be best to keep recognizing if only to think about how we, as concerned adults, are implicated. ■

SHIFT OUT OF FIRST: Third Person Narration Has Advantages

Elizabeth C. Schuhmann, University of Louisville

ENGLISH teachers who have used contemporary young adult novels in their literature classes probably realize that one of the literary techniques that is relied upon heavily by the authors of these novels is first person narration. Many of the best known authors—Paul Zindel, Judy Blume, John Donovan, S.E. Hinton, Bette Greene, and Robert Newton Peck among others—use first person narration in their books. Because of this prevalence of first person narration in young adult novels, and because of the popularity of these books, many advocates of novels written for young people have come to consider first person narration a preferred technique for this kind of literature.

Undoubtedly there are some strong and valid reasons for using first person narration in young adult novels. The first person narrator provides a readily recognizable figure with whom the adolescent (who is characteristically preoccupied with finding his own identity) can identify. Also, first person narration in the young adult novel generally restricts the language to the appropriate expression of an adolescent protagonist and thus achieves a readability low enough to suit a majority of adolescents.

However, the first peson narration technique is not without its natural weaknesses and limitations. A close look at novels by Hinton and Zindel can reveal some of the limitations that first person narration can impose upon the experience of the reader. In contrast, a close look at novels by Cormier, Hamner, and Bridgers can reveal some of the extra opportunities for richness of literary experience that can be offered by third person narration.

In several ways first person narration can limit characterization in a young adult novel. No matter how keenly observant of details the first person narrators may be (and some first person narrators in adolescent novels possess an observational acuity that seems extremely sophisticated for their age and experience), they can never really observe directly what goes on in the mind of any other character. So, not only are readers of the first person novel denied direct access to the personal thoughts and attitudes that can reveal directly how a variety of characters (other than the narrator) feel about themselves and their lives, but they also are unable to view directly how a variety of characters feel about each other. How fully characters other than the narrator are developed depends on how many situations the author devises in which the narrator is able to observe the words and actions of those characters. It also must be realized that certain character information conveyed through these observations is necessarily biased by the singularity of its source and by the biases of that same source. Sometimes these limitations that first person narration imposes on characterization can result in the reduction of some characters to mere stereotyped figures.

Characterization in S.E. Hinton's *That Was Then, This Is Now* seems in at least one important respect to be limited by first person narration. Although the book attempts to contrast the characterization of two teenage protagonists (Bryon and Mark) the story is told from the single viewpoint of Bryon. Therefore, when Bryon develops into a responsible citizen and Mark ends up in jail, the reader understands how feelings and attitudes have matured inside of Bryon; however, the reader knows only what Bryon thinks has happened inside of Mark. Even though the reader is allowed to know certain things about Mark's attitudes and beliefs from his actions and his conversations with Bryon, he still misses an intimate view of Mark's pressures and motivations as they are perceived in Mark's own mind. Therefore, the story has to be a somewhat more reliable exposé of why Bryon avoided trouble than of why Mark did not. Because of the limitations of first person narration, only one character is given the in-depth characterization made possible by direct access to the minds of characters.

First person narration, besides limiting characterization in a young adult novel, also imposes limitations on the language of the novel. Because the language must be appropriate to the adolescent narrator, it can at times be denied the expanded opportunity for richness that often accompanies the expression of individuals with greater maturity and experience. Sometimes if an author does permit an adolescent narrator to use very lengthy and mature images and comparisons to articulate very mature insights, the author weakens the consistency and credibility of the narrator's character. In Paul Zindel's *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon*, Chris, the fifteen-year-old narrator, generally uses clever but relatively compressed images and metaphors to describe his impressions of isolated situations and

events. Chris' typical mode of expression describes a nod between himself and sixteen-year-old Harold as "a weird nod that reminded me of the kind of expression beaten-down slaves shared in those old movies about flesh traffic from Africa." (p. 16) When Lloyd's liquor case is raided, Chris quips, ". . . all the bottles of Wild Turkey had flown the coop." (p. 133) This brief and cute mode of expression certainly seems to leave the reader open to surprise when the same narrator ends the book with an expanded mental soliloquy that includes a barrage of rather mature and eloquently expressed insights about the human condition. In part the soliloquy reads,

> "I felt as though I was unfolding under the moonlight. I was opening up like a seed that had been thrust painfully and deeply—even ruthlessly—into the ground and given a merciless warning and command to grow. The cloud that had been hanging over me for so many years of my life on earth was suddenly lifting thanks to an anguished, tormented man who now lay lifeless on a bed not far away. And when the moon moved again from behind the cloud it seemed I felt an understanding and a compassion for the entire human race." (p. 154)

Although most readers expect some growth in insight, and even in expression, to occur in an interesting dynamic character, an overly sudden and extreme growth, such as the one that is reflected in Chris' soliloquy, can compromise the credibility of the character. It would seem then that Zindel, in failing to conform to the limitations that his particular first person narrator imposes on the language of his novel, has marred the effectiveness of his work.

Zindel's *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* also can be viewed as an example of how plot development can be restricted and even weakened by first person narration. With first person narration events must usually be sequenced according to the movements of a single character, and sometimes the reader's view of events has to be somewhat contrived. Events in the plot of *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* have to follow the movements of fifteen-year-old Chris who narrates the story. When Chris' mother forces him to leave the house that is the scene of the major portion of the plot, the reader has no way of filling the gap in what goes on there before Chris returns. Also, because Chris' presence might not seem appropriate in the scene in which the character Lloyd shoots himself, the author has to invent a loose floor board in the attic for Chris and the reader to be able to observe this climactic event in the story. Undoubtedly the use of a first person narrator seems to cause events in the plot to be somewhat incomplete and manipulated.

In contrast to the weaknesses of first person narration and the limitations it often places on the scope of the reader's experience with characterization, language, and plot is the strength and versatility of third person narration. Third person novels by Cormier, Hamner, and Bridgers can serve as good examples of the extra opportunities for richness of literary experience that can be offered. It should also be noted here that, despite the fact that these third person books focus on more than a single teenage narrator, each book does present at least one central teenage protagonist with whom the young adult reader can identify. Each book also falls well within an appropriate range of readability for the young adult audience. As a matter of fact each of the four books falls below ninth-grade readability on a Fry Readability Chart.

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier displays the extra richness of characterization that is possible with a third person narrator. In this novel the third person narrator delves into the minds of not just one character, but of at least ten characters. In so doing he creates vivid individual portraits of a number of characters. Through the thoughts and feelings of Jerry, Archie, Obie, Goober, Emile Janza, Brian Cochran, and a handful of other student characters, the reader gets a strong well-rounded image of the individuals (particularly Jerry and Archie) who are primary actors in the war. Cormier also demonstrates how third person narration can be manipulated to serve artistic purposes that require some limitation of characterization. For instance, the mystery surrounding the true source of Brother Leon's obsessively cruel behavior is one of the focal points of the book. Since Cormier seems intent on avoiding any easy answers to this question about cruelty and evil, he gracefully manipulates his third peson narration so as not to reveal any of Brother Leon's inner thoughts and feelings. Thus the versatility of the third person omniscient narration technique enables a skillful writer to manipulate the reader's

attention toward many different viewpoints that create rich characterizations, and yet only toward the viewpoints he wishes the reader to be aware of.

The Homecoming by Earl Hamner Jr. is another good example of the richness of characterization facilitated by the use of the third person narrator. It is also a good example of how this extra richness of characterization can enhance at least one other aspect of the reader's experience with the literature. In this book, which is the basis of the popular T.V. series "The Waltons," Hamner takes the reader to a small Virginia community during the Depression and helps the reader develop a warm acquaintance with Clay-boy Spencer, his parents, several of his siblings, his maternal grandparents, and the old maid Staples sisters. Although much of the action centers on Clay-boy, Hamner devises plenty of opportunity for his omniscient narrator to tell about the backgrounds, thoughts, feelings, and habits of most of his characters and also about their impression of and attitudes toward one another. The omniscient narrator even devises opportunities for Clay Sr. to reveal his feelings throughout the book despite the fact that he does not personally enter the story until the last chapter. For example, in Chapter 2, Clay-boy's thoughts of his father's intentions concerning a new house on Spencer's mountain smoothly lead into a third person revelation of Clay Sr.'s internal feelings and desires. In this way third person narration allows Hamner to characterize many people freely and richly, and through these characterizations to build interest and suspense in a plot that revolves around the absence of one of the characters. In this novel third person narration enhances the reader's experience with plot as well as with characterization.

A young adult novelist whose books offer good examples of the ways in which third person narration can enrich a reader's experience with characterization, plot, and also language is Sue Ellen Bridgers. In *Home Before Dark* this narration technique adds many dimensions to characterization by looking into the mind of Stella, the fourteen-year-old protagonist, and also into the minds of at least seven other characters. Readers get not only a very objective view of Stella by viewing her in relation to other peoples' thoughts as well as her own, but they also get to know Stella's mother, father, stepmother, aunt, uncle, and two boyfriends.

Plot also seems to benefit from third person narration in *Home Before Dark*. Action involving various important characters occurs at the same time in two locations. While Stella Willis is sharing an emotional scene with her injured friend Toby in her aunt's kitchen, her father James Earl is at the store in town buying medical supplies for Toby and building his acquaintance with the old maid storekeeper he will eventually marry. Because a first person narrator does not have to be present for all the action, various aspects of the plot can gracefully develop simultaneously.

Third person narration seems to provide abundant opportunity for richness of language in Bridgers' *All Together Now*. When Hazard Whitaker is introduced into the story, Bridgers uses verbs such as "crunched," "shuffled," "flailing," and "straining" (p. 12) to create a unified image of the "kind of desperation in his movements" (p. 12) that mirrors the anxious frustration in the 52-year-old bachelor. Whereas the choice of words and the expanse of this image might seem inappropriately mature for the twelve-year-old protagonist in the story, they are effective and understandable coming from an objective third person narrator.

It would seem possible to say in summary that third person narration in young adult novels can sometimes enrich a reader's experience with a novel by allowing an author to be more creative, versatile, and thorough in characterization, plot development, and language than is possible when using first person narration. Third person narration often allows for fuller development of a larger number of characters than does first person narration. The extra control over characterization that third person narration provides enables authors to manipulate characterization with a versatility that can subtly enhance both plot development and theme. Finally, third person narration also seems to release the language of the young adult novel from the limitation of an average adolescent expressive vocabulary and thus allows for more variety in modes of expression.

Novels that are enriched by third person narration can have many practical benefits for adolescent students and their teachers. The in-depth characterization permitted by direct access to the minds of an assortment of characters provides the teenage student with many facets of the adolescent experience from which an aspect of particular personal interest might be identified. Moreover, because the many-faceted teenage protagonist can appeal to a wider range of student interests, it has a better chance of meeting teachers' instructional goals than a more limited character might. Third person narration is also able to produce a greater variety of three-dimensional characters that teachers can use to improve students' understanding (from several viewpoints) of people in different positions in life. The plot in a third person novel can be more complex and thus more likely to hold the interest of young students who characteristically like action in their reading. Finally, the increased opportunity for rich-

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REPORTS FROM BOSTON SESSIONS

PRE-1966 NOVELS STILL WORTHY

Dwight L. Burton identified ten to twelve pre-1966 adolescent novels still worthy of attention, discussing their common characteristics, contrasting them with leading junior novels of the present, and indicating their relationship to the major functions of the junior novel genre today.

HISTORICAL FICTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Joel Taxel pointed out that many teachers have long recognized that historical fiction affords them the means to give life and dimension to the personalities and events of history. What is often not understood is that historical fiction contains an implicit interpretation of historical events. This session explored the different conceptions of the American Revolution contained in novels written about that subject. The discussion focused on how literature and historical interpretation change and are affected by the social climate in which authors and historians work. Specific classroom practices were suggested in light of these considerations.

DRAMATIC DUOS: THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM A STAGE

Ellen S. Kester, explained a program called Dramatic Duos, which derives from the selection and performance of matching scenes from literature of different time periods but of comparable character or thematic implications. This program revitalizes the English classroom by energizing students' skills: convergent and divergent production, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. By selecting and performing "Duos"—key "scenes" or parallel excerpts from classical and contemporary literature—students experience the author's viewpoint; original writing is generated. Duos includes: (1) a list of suitable parallel scenes (from novels, short stories, drama, and poetry); (2) directions for training students in oral interpretation and acting; and (3) guidelines for end-of-the-semester "Classroom Showcases."

HUMOR IN ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

Don L. F. Nilsen and Alleen Pace Nilsen contended that television and other communication technology have greatly altered the linguistic skills of today's adolescents. They showed that today's adolescents are a great deal more linguistically aware than were adolescents of earlier periods, despite the fact that many fundmentalists are stressing that they don't know the basics. This was done by investigating the literary, rhetorical, and linguistic devices for manipulating the language used by the authors of books and magazines read and understood by adolescents.

NON-FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Natalie White asserted that most texts on adolescent literature agree that the use of nonfiction for the adolescent reader is important but that they never deal with it in depth. Reader interest surveys and lifetime reading habits indicate that nonfiction should be included in reading lists and curriculum. Discussion centered on reasons for and uses of nonfiction for adolescents.

HEROIC LITERATURE AND THE ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCE

Audena Cowin discussed the relationship between adolescent needs and heroic literature (tragedy, epic, romance) and methods and materials to make this literature accessible and attractive to students using experiential approaches; such as student-adopted "personas" to create living literature and museum-literary investigations. These activities may culminate in an evening "festival" for parents, students, and staff.

FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS

An Interpretation of the "LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS"

(Following is the text of a position paper adopted by the ALA Council on June 30, 1972, and amended July 1, 1981.)

Some library procedures and practices effectively deny minors access to certain services and materials available to adults. Such procedures and practices are not in accord with the "Library Bill of Rights" and are opposed by the American Library Association.

Restrictions take a variety of forms, including, among others, restricted reading rooms for adult use only, library cards limiting circulation of some materials to adults only, closed collections for adult use only, collections limited to teacher use, or restricted according to a student's grade level, and interlibrary loan service for adult use only.

Article 5 of the "Library Bill of Rights" states that, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." All limitations on minors' access to library materials and services violate that Article. The "right to use a library" includes use of, and access to, all library materials and services. Thus, practices which allow adults to use some services and materials which are denied to minors abridge the use of libraries based on age.

Material selection decisions are often made and restrictions are often initiated under the assumption that certain materials may be "harmful" to minors, or in an effort to avoid controversy with parents. Libraries or library boards who would restrict the access of minors to materials and services because of actual or suspected parental objections should bear in mind that they do not serve *in loco parentis*. Varied levels of intellectual development among young people and differing family background and child-rearing philosophies are significant factors not accommodated by a uniform policy based upon age.

In today's world, children are exposed to adult life much earlier than in the past. They read materials and view a variety of media on the adult level at home and elsewhere. Current emphasis upon early childhood education has also increased opportunities for young people to learn and to have access to materials, and has decreased the validity of using chronological age as an index to the use of libraries. The period of time during which children are interested in reading materials specifically designed for them grows steadily shorter, and librarians must recognize and adjust to this change if they wish to serve young people effectively. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure that young people have access to a wide range of informational and recreational materials and services that reflects sufficient diversity to meet the young peoson's needs.

The American Library Association opposes libraries restricting access to library materials and services for minors and holds that it is the parents—and only parents—who may restrict their children—and only their children—from access to library materials and services. Parents who would rather their children did not have access to certain materials should so advise their children. The library and its staff are responsible for providing equal access to library materials and services for all library users.

The word "age" was incorporated into Article 5 of the "Library Bill of Rights" because young people are entitled to the same access to libraries and to the materials in libraries as are adults. Materials selection should not be diluted on that account.

SHEILA SCHWARTZ RECEIVES AWARD

Following is the text of the acceptance speech by Dr. Schwartz upon her receiving ALAN's Distinguished Service Award:

Thank you for giving me the 1981 ALAN Award for Distinguished Leadership, Scholarship, and Writing in the Field of Adolescent Literature.

I have been a member of the NCTE for 20 years, a life member for ten, and it is to the NCTE that I owe most of my accomplishments during this period.

It began with articles and book reviews for *Elementary English, English Education,* and *The English Journal*. It was on the basis of these articles and reviews that I was contacted to write my two methods books and three non-fiction YA books.

But it is specifically to ALAN that I owe the novel writing career that has been the center of my work life since 1978. When Alleen Nilsen asked me to handle young adult reviews for the first ALAN Newsletters, I farmed out many of the reviews but wrote an equal number myself. And after a while, I began to think, "I can do that," and from this inspiration came *Like Mother, Like Me* and *Growing Up Guilty*.

It is not only in the writing area that I am indebted to the NCTE. Many of us in the area of English Education work in situations in which we are alone. In my case, I am in a Secondary Education Department in which only this artificial grouping gives me connection to my professorial equivalents in math, science, social studies, etc. So it has been to the NCTE that I have turned for the newest in research, in materials, in methodology, and in connection to colleagues. The NCTE publications have helped to give me a cohesive pedagogical philosophy and the fine book exhibits at conferences have also helped me to remain knowledgeable and *au courant* in my field.

I am further grateful to the NCTE for giving me the opportunity to grow through holding office in the Secondary Section, CEE, SLATE, and ALAN. And I hope there are ways in which I may continue to serve.

And finally, I am indebted in the personal area. In 1977, when I was a lonely Fulbright in Ireland, I flew back to New York City for the NCTE Conference and the sudden warmth of old friends was like the return to central heating and reminded this lonely wanderer that there was indeed a place where I belonged. Not one geographical place, but many places, wherever an NCTE Conference was being held.

When my daughter suddenly died in September, 1978, I forced myself to go to Kansas City. I stood shivering in my bleak hotel room, then steeled myself to go and mingle, and my NCTE friends came to me and embraced me and told me that they cared.

The NCTE and ALAN have given far more to me than I to them. I thank you all for this wonderful honor and hope that I will be able to contribute to the NCTE and ALAN for at least twenty more years. Thank you.

Sheila Schwartz

NEW IMPRINT FOR YOUNG ADULTS

New American Library announced it has introduced a new imprint of books for young adults. "Signet Vista" began its publishing life in January of this year to fulfill the needs of an ever inquisitive market with quality fiction and non-fiction in an inexpensive format. Combining a backlist, including such titles as *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones; Lisa, Bright and Dark;* and *Where the Lilies Bloom,* among others, with paperback originals and reprints aimed at the reader age twelve and up, "Signet Vista" will be a separate category of books devoted to the young reader.

The decision to consolidate a backlist of "Signet Young Adult" titles with new titles is a result of The New American Library's desire to identify titles specifically intended for the young adult. Thus as a service to both the bookseller and the consumer, Young Adult titles previously published under the "Signet" logo will be reissued under the new, unique "Signet Vista" logo.

Featured will be the works of such award-winning authors as Anne Snyder (*First Step, Goodbye Paper Doll, Country Play*) and Maureen Crane Warski (*A Boat to Nowhere*) along with such first novelists as Jina Delton, whose book, *Two Blocks Down,* a gripping story of a beautiful loner who creates an imaginary shelter from the world of the suburban teenager, was written when the author was the same age as her 17-year-old heroine.

Twenty-five new "Signet Vista" titles will be published in 1982, and twenty-four each year thereafter—two new titles and one outstanding backlist title each month.

Among the first books to be published are the following titles:

- *A Place Apart* by Paula Fox, the story of a teenage girl struggling to define herself in a changing world after the death of her father. A *School Library Journal* Best Book, 1980, A *New York Times* Notable Book, 1980, A New York Public Library "Books for the Teen Age" Selection, a 1980 American Book Awards nominee for children.
- *The Snowbird* by Patricia Calvert, the story of a young orphan girl and her beautiful horse Snowbird, set in the Dakota territory of the 1880s. An ALA Best Book for Young Adults.
- *Football Dreams* by David Guy, a first novel of a young man's rites of passage, set in the highly charged world of prep-school football. A New York Public Library "Books for the Teen Age" Selection.

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Settings of YA novels

Answers to the Matching Quiz:

1. C	6. G
2. I	7. D
3. J	8. E
4. F	9. B
5. H	10. A

Possible titles and authors for the fill-ins (you may have thought of others):

1. Southeast Missouri—*Rass*, Bernice Rabe
2. The Everglades—*You Are the Rain*, R. R. Knudson
3. The Ozarks—*Where the Red Fern Grows*, Wilson Rawls
4. Kansas—*Deadly Game at Stony Creek*, Peter Zachary Cohen
5. Vermont—*A Day No Pigs Would Die*, Robert Newton Peck
6. Massachusetts—*I Am the Cheese*, Robert Cormier
7. Pennsylvania—*Z for Zachariah*, Robert C. O'Brien
8. Mississippi—*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Mildred Taylor
9. New Hampshire—*Gathering of Days*, Joan Blos
10. Chesapeake Bay—*Jacob Have I Loved*, Katherine Paterson
11. North Carolina—*Home Before Dark*, Sue Ellen Bridgers
12. The Adirondacks—*Snowbound*, Harry Mazer

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ness of expression in the third person novel can expose students to an element of the literary experience that English teachers are traditionally committed to and perennially troubled about neglecting when using young adult novels in their classes.

Certainly students' learning opportunities and teachers' assignment opportunities (in such areas as writing, discussion, role playing, dramatics, etc.) are maximized by the extra dimensions third person narration adds to the young adult novel. It would seem then appropriate for teachers who are concerned about offering their students a variety of young adult books from which they can get the most personal and literary benefit to include some third person novels among their selections. ■

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